V

'V' Poetry Series: 14 Poets
Jordannah Elizabeth Graham

Dedicated to AG

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V Series: 14 Poets (Selections)
JEG

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Introduction

There is the question of 'Love' – what it is and what it is not. Who can offer the most and what this world is actually made of regarding the substance of peace, generosity and romanticism.

I cannot begin to understand what the majority of souls believe in when it comes to love but there is a general consensus that within its existence there is safety, understanding, calm and healing energy.

There is no one in the Universe who does not want love in its essence, in that, the truth that the heart can lead to commitment, health, long-standing forward motion and kindness. Yes, there can be conflict, but it is not rooted in love, but an avenue, a route or a path back to it.

Returning to love once there is a dip in the energetic atmosphere is true triumph.

I was inspired by my paramore who confessed that Voltaire is his favorite poet. I had known him for so long, and did not know for circumstantial reasons or travel and priority of mature decisions that leave, at times, simplistic preferences by the wayside.

I know his favorite color, a touch of amber deep within the realm around his iris and so on, but not, until recently, his favorite poet.

Voltaire opens this collection.

Voltaire

Thelema And Macareus

Thelema's lively, all admire
Her charms, but she's too full of fire;
Impatience ever racks her breast,
Her heart a stranger is to rest.
A jocund youth of bulky size
This nymph beheld with tender eyes,
From hers his humor differed quite,
Black does not differ more from white.
On his broad face and open mien
There dwelt tranquility serene;
His converse is from languor free
And boisterous vivacity.
His sleep was sound and sweet at night,
Active he was at morn like light;
As day advanced he pleased still more,
Macareus was the name he bore.
His mistress void of thought as fair
Tormented him with too much care:
She adoration thought her due,
And into fierce reproaches flew;
Her Macareus with laughter left,
And of all hopes of bliss bereft.
From clime to clime like mad she ran
To seek the dear, the faithless man:
From him she could not live content,
So first of all to court she went.
There she of every one inquired,
'Is Macareus with you retired?'
Hearing that name the witlings there
To laugh and smile could scarce forbear.
'Madam,' said they, 'who is this squire
Macareus, for whom you inquire?
Madam, his character display,
Or else we shan't know what to say.'
'He is a man,' returned the fair,
'Possessed of each endowment rare,
A man of virtue so refined,
He hated none of human kind;
To whom no man e'er owed a spite,
Who always knew to reason right,
Who void of care lived still at ease,

And knew all human kind to please.'
The courtiers answered with a sneer,
'You are not like to find him here,
Mortals with such endowments rare
But seldom to the court repair.'
The fair then to the city bent
Her way, and stopped a convent.
She thought that in that calm retreat
She might her tranquil lover meet.
'Madam,' then said the under-prior,
The man for whom you thus inquire
We long have waited for in vain,
To visit us he ne'er did deign.
But such a loss to compensate,
We've idle time and vigils late;
We have our stated days of fasting
With discord and divisions lasting.'
A short monk then with crown shaved o'er,
Said, 'Madam, seek this man no more;
For I'm by false reports misled,
Or else your lover's long since dead.'
What the monk insolently said
Made Thelema with rage grow red:
'Brother,' said she, 'I'd have you know
The man who has caused all my woe
Was made for me, and me alone,
He's in this world on which I'm thrown;
With me he'll live and die content,
I'm propery his element:
Who aught else told you, on my word,
Has said a thing that's most absurd.'
This said, away the fair one ran,
Resolved to find the inconstant man.
'At Paris, where the wits abound,
Perhaps,' said she, 'he may be found,
The wits speak of him as a sage;'
On of them said: 'You by our page,
Madam, perhaps have been misled;
When there of Macareus you read,
We spoke of one we never knew.'
Then near she to the law-court drew,
Shutting her eyes, quick passed the fair,
'My love,' she cried, 'can't sure be there;
There's some attraction in the Court,
But who'd to this vile place resort?
Themis' black followers needs must prove
Eternal foes to him I love.'
Fair Thelema at Rameau's shrine,
Where the muse utters strains divine,
The man who her so much neglected
There to meet, was what she expected.

At those feasts oft she was a guest,
Where meet gay people richly dressed;
Such people as we all agree
To call the best of company.
People of an address polite,
She looked upon at the first sight
As perfect copies of her lover;
But she soon after could discover,
That striving most to appear the same,
They still were widest of their aim.
At last the fair one in despair,
Finding how vain was all her care,
And grown of her inquiries tired,
To her retreat would have retired:
The object which she there first spied
Was Macareus by her bedside;
He waited there, hid from her eyes,
That he the fair one might surprise:
'Henceforward,' said he, 'live with me,
From all inquietude be free,
Do not, like vain and haughty dames,
Be too assuming in your claims;
And if you would henceforth possess
My person and my tenderness,
Never more make demands more high
Than suits me with them to comply.'
Who's understood by either name,
Both of the lover and the dame,
The folks who are profound in Greek
Cannot be very far to seek.
Taught by this emblem they'll relate
What's to be every mortal's fate,
Thee, Macareus, though all men choose,
Though much they love thee, oft they lose;
And I'm persuaded that you dwell
With me, though this I fear to tell.
Who boasts that with thee he is blessed,
By envy oft is dispossessed;
A man should know, to make thee sure,
How to live happy while obscure.

Emily Dicksenson

"Hope" is the thing with feathers
"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -

That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

Given in Marriage unto Thee
Given in Marriage unto Thee
Oh thou Celestial Host—
Bride of the Father and the Son
Bride of the Holy Ghost.

Other Betrothal shall dissolve—
Wedlock of Will, decay—
Only the Keeper of this Ring
Conquer Mortality—

<u>*Maya Angelou*</u>

"a song flung up to heaven": poem for Maya Angelou
By Dr. Kendra N. Bryant Aya

who will honor her with poems
as much as she's honored us?
she—
our bodacious black woman poet
our mother, grandmother, sister
our friend
she—
who rose thru racism & rape
speechlessness & humiliation
teenage pregnancy & segregation
she—
who loved Shakespeare just as much as Dunbar
who privileged teachers & librarians
who walked with Martin & Malcolm
who will honor her with poems
as much as she's honored us?
she claimed we're phenomenal women
she encouraged us to rise
she united us on morning's pulses
she—
who stood in her grandmother's genius
while affirmed in her mother's love
offered herself for borrowing, for she knew:
nobody, no, nobody can make it our here alone
& we—quite gratefully—took her:
into our churches
into our schools

into our Presidential Inaugurations & United Nations
we— printed her in textbooks
featured her in films
taped her onto our bathroom mirrors
we— sat her on our bookshelves
placed her in our memories
fixed her in our hearts
so tho we may be caged birds
we have the fire to sing
her traveling shoes became our own
we gathered together in her name
we sung & swung & got merry like Christmas
for life didn't frighten us at all
cause the stars weren't lonesome beside her light
who will honor her with poems
as much as she's honored us?
she—
our brazen black woman poet
our amazing peace
the heart of a woman
she—
who got her cool drink of water 'fore she died
who needs nothing else for her journey now
whose wings fit her perfectly well
trumpets sound
shakers sing
a song's flown up to heaven!

Langston Hugues

The Weary Blues
Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
I heard a Negro play.
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
He did a lazy sway. . . .
He did a lazy sway. . . .
To the tune o' those Weary Blues.
With his ebony hands on each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody.
O Blues!
Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.
Sweet Blues!
Coming from a black man's soul.
O Blues!
In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone
I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan—
"Ain't got nobody in all this world,
Ain't got nobody but ma self.

I's gwine to quit ma frownin'
And put ma troubles on the shelf."

Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.
He played a few chords then he sang some more—
"I got the Weary Blues
And I can't be satisfied.
Got the Weary Blues
And can't be satisfied—
I ain't happy no mo'
And I wish that I had died."
And far into the night he crooned that tune.
The stars went out and so did the moon.
The singer stopped playing and went to bed
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.
He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.

<u>*Yeats*</u>

After Long Silence
Speech after long silence; it is right,
All other lovers being estranged or dead,
Unfriendly lamplight hid under its shade,
The curtains drawn upon unfriendly night,
That we descant and yet again descant
Upon the supreme theme of Art and Song:
Bodily decrepitude is wisdom; young
We loved each other and were ignorant.

A Poet To His Beloved
I BRING you with reverent hands
The books of my numberless dreams,
White woman that passion has worn
As the tide wears the dove-grey sands,
And with heart more old than the horn
That is brimmed from the pale fire of time:
White woman with numberless dreams,
I bring you my passionate rhyme.

A Prayer For My Daughter
ONCE more the storm is howling, and half hid
Under this cradle-hood and coverlid
My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle
But Gregory's wood and one bare hill
Whereby the haystack- and roof-levelling wind.
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;
And for an hour I have walked and prayed
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.
I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
And-under the arches of the bridge, and scream

In the elms above the flooded stream;
Imagining in excited reverie
That the future years had come,
Dancing to a frenzied drum,
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.
May she be granted beauty and yet not
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,
Or hers before a looking-glass, for such,
Being made beautiful overmuch,
Consider beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness and maybe
The heart-revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never find a friend.
Helen being chosen found life flat and dull
And later had much trouble from a fool,
While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray,
Being fatherless could have her way
Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man.
It's certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat
Whereby the Horn of plenty is undone.
In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;
Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned
By those that are not entirely beautiful;
Yet many, that have played the fool
For beauty's very self, has charm made wise.
And many a poor man that has roved,
Loved and thought himself beloved,
From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.
May she become a flourishing hidden tree
That all her thoughts may like the linnet be,
And have no business but dispensing round
Their magnanimities of sound,
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.
O may she live like some green laurel
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.
My mind, because the minds that I have loved,
The sort of beauty that I have approved,
Prosper but little, has dried up of late,
Yet knows that to be choked with hate
May well be of all evil chances chief.
If there's no hatred in a mind
Assault and battery of the wind
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.
An intellectual hatred is the worst,
So let her think opinions are accursed.
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born
Out of the mouth of plenty's horn,
Because of her opinionated mind
Barter that horn and every good

By quiet natures understood
For an old bellows full of angry wind?
Considering that, all hatred driven hence,
The soul recovers radical innocence
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,
And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will;
She can, though every face should scowl
And every windy quarter howl
Or every bellows burst, be happy Still.
And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;
For arrogance and hatred are the wares
Peddled in the thoroughfares.
How but in custom and in ceremony
Are innocence and beauty born?
Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

A Prayer For My Son
BID a strong ghost stand at the head
That my Michael may sleep sound,
Nor cry, nor turn in the bed
Till his morning meal come round;
And may departing twilight keep
All dread afar till morning's back.
That his mother may not lack
Her fill of sleep.
Bid the ghost have sword in fist:
Some there are, for I avow
Such devilish things exist,
Who have planned his murder, for they know
Of some most haughty deed or thought
That waits upon his future days,
And would through hatred of the bays
Bring that to nought.
Though You can fashion everything
From nothing every day, and teach
The morning stats to sing,
You have lacked articulate speech
To tell Your simplest want, and known,
Wailing upon a woman's knee,
All of that worst ignominy
Of flesh and bone;
And when through all the town there ran
The servants of Your enemy,
A woman and a man,
Unless the Holy Writings lie,
Hurried through the smooth and rough
And through the fertile and waste,
protecting, till the danger past,

With human love.

Nikki Giovanni

Make Me Rain
make me rain
turn me into a snowflake

let me rest
on your tongue

make me a piece of ice
so I can cool you

let me be the cloud
that embraces you

or the quilt
that gets you dry

snuggle close
listen to me sing

on the windowsill

make me rain
on you

Alice Walker

Desire
My desire
is always the same; wherever Life
deposits me:
I want to stick my toe
& soon my whole body
into the water.
I want to shake out a fat broom
& sweep dried leaves
bruised blossoms
dead insects
& dust.
I want to grow
something.
It seems impossible that desire
can sometimes transform into devotion;
but this has happened.

And that is how I've survived:
how the hole
I carefully tended
in the garden of my heart
grew a heart to fill it.

She
She is the one
who will notice
that the first snapdragon
of Spring
is
in bloom;

She is the one
who will tell the most
funny
&
complicated
joke.

She is the one
who will surprise you
by knowing the difference
between turnips
and collard
Greens;

& between biscuits
& scones.

She is the one who knows where
to take you
for dancing
or where the food
& the restaurant's
decor
are not
to be
missed.

She is the one
who is saintly.

She is the one
who reserves the right
to dress
like a slut.

She is the one
who takes you shopping;

She is the one
who knows where
the best clothes
are bought
cheap.

She is the one
who warms your
home
with her fragrance;

the one who brings
music, magic & joy.

She is the one
speaking
the truth
from her heart.

She is the one at the bedside
wedding, funerals
or divorce
of all the best people
you dearly love.

She is the one
with courage.

She is the one
who speaks
her bright mind;

She is the one
who encourages young &
old
to do the same.

She is the one
on the picket line, at the barricade,
at the prison, in jail;

She is the one
who is there.

If they come for me
& I am at her house
I know
she will hide me.

If I tell her

where I have hidden
my heart
she will keep
my secret
safe.

She is the one
who
without hesitation
comes to my aid &
my defense.

She is the one
who believes
my side of the story
First;

She is the one
whose heart
is open.

She is the one who loves.

She is the one who makes
activism
the most compelling
because she is the one
who is irresistable
her own self.

She is our sister, our teacher, our friend:

Gloria Steinem.

Born 75 years ago
Glorious
To your parents
& still
Radiant
Today.

Happy Birthday, Beloved.
The grand feast
Of your noble Spirit
Has been
& is the cake
that nourishes
Us.

We thank you for your Beauty
& your Being.

Namaste.

Charles Bukowski

And The Moon And The Stars And The World
Long walks at night—
that's what good for the soul:
peeking into windows
watching tired housewives
trying to fight off
their beer-maddened husbands.

Allen Ginsberg

136 Syllables at Rocky Mountain Dharma Center
Tail turned to red sunset on a juniper crown a lone magpie cawks.

Mad at Oryoki in the shrine-room -- Thistles blossomed late afternoon.

Put on my shirt and took it off in the sun walking the path to lunch.

A dandelion seed floats above the marsh grass with the mosquitos.

At 4 A.M. the two middleaged men sleeping together holding hands.

In the half-light of dawn a few birds warble under the Pleiades.

Sky reddens behind fir trees, larks twitter, sparrows cheep cheep cheep cheep cheep.

Rumi

This Marriage

May these vows and this marriage be blessed.
May it be sweet milk,
this marriage, like wine and halvah.
May this marriage offer fruit and shade
like the date palm.
May this marriage be full of laughter,
our every day a day in paradise.
May this marriage be a sign of compassion,
a seal of happiness here and hereafter.
May this marriage have a fair face and a good name,
an omen as welcomes the moon in a clear blue sky.
I am out of words to describe
how spirit mingles in this marriage.

Chinua Achebe

Love Cycle
At dawn slowly
the sun withdraws his
long misty arms of
embrace. Happy lovers

whose exertions leave
no aftertaste nor slush
of love's combustion; Earth
perfumed in dewdrop
fragrance wakes

to whispers of
soft-eyed light…
Later he
will wear out his temper
ploughing the vast acres
of heaven and take it

out of her in burning
darts of anger. Long
accustomed to such caprice
she waits patiently

for evening when thoughts
of another night will
restore his mellowness
and her power over him.

Christopher Okigbo

The Tree
Before you, mother Idoto,
naked I stand,
before your watery presence,
a prodigal,

leaning on an oilbean,
lost in your legend…

Under your power wait I
on barefoot,
watchman for the watchword
at heavensgate;
out of the depths my cry
give ear and hearken.

Susan Sontag

Who would we be?

A writer, I think,
is someone
who pays attention
to the world.

That means
trying
to understand,
take in, connect with

what wickedness
human beings
are capable of,
and not be corrupted –

made cynical,
superficial –
by this understanding.
Literature can tell us

what the world
is like.
Literature can give standards
and pass on deep knowledge,

incarnated
in language,
in narrative.
Literature can train,

and exercise,
our ability to weep
for those
who are not us or ours.

Who would we be
if we could not sympathise
with those
who are not us or ours?

Who would we be
if we could not forget
ourselves,
at least some of the time?

Who would we be
if we could not learn?
Become something
other than what we are?

Walt Whitman

Adieu To A Soldier

ADIEU, O soldier!
You of the rude campaigning, (which we shared,)
The rapid march, the life of the camp,
The hot contention of opposing fronts—the long maneuver,
Red battles with their slaughter,—the stimulus—the strong, terrific
game,
Spell of all brave and manly hearts—the trains of Time through you,
and like of you, all fill'd,
With war, and war's expression.

Adieu, dear comrade!
Your mission is fulfill'd—but I, more warlike,
Myself, and this contentious soul of mine,

Still on our own campaigning bound,
Through untried roads, with ambushes, opponents lined,
Through many a sharp defeat and many a crisis—often baffled,
Here marching, ever marching on, a war fight out—aye here,
To fiercer, weightier battles give expression.

AS I sat alone, by blue Ontario's shore,
As I mused of these mighty days, and of peace return'd, and the dead
that return no more,
A Phantom, gigantic, superb, with stern visage, accosted me;
Chant me the poem, it said, that comes from the soul of America-
chant me the carol of victory;
And strike up the marches of Libertad- marches more powerful yet;
And sing me before you go, the song of the throes of Democracy.

(Democracy- the destin'd conqueror- yet treacherous lip-smiles
everywhere,
And Death and infidelity at every step.)

A Nation announcing itself,
I myself make the only growth by which I can be appreciated, 10
I reject none, accept all, then reproduce all in my own forms.

A breed whose proof is in time and deeds;
What we are, we are- nativity is answer enough to objections;
We wield ourselves as a weapon is wielded,
We are powerful and tremendous in ourselves,
We are executive in ourselves- We are sufficient in the variety of
ourselves,
We are the most beautiful to ourselves, and in ourselves;

We stand self-pois'd in the middle, branching thence over the world;
From Missouri, Nebraska, or Kansas, laughing attacks to scorn.

Nothing is sinful to us outside of ourselves, 20
Whatever appears, whatever does not appear, we are beautiful or
sinful in ourselves only.

(O mother! O sisters dear!
If we are lost, no victor else has destroy'd us;
It is by ourselves we go down to eternal night.)

Have you thought there could be but a single Supreme?
There can be any number of Supremes- One does not countervail
another, any more than one eyesight countervails another, or
one life countervails another.

All is eligible to all,
All is for individuals- All is for you,
No condition is prohibited- not God's, or any.

All comes by the body- only health puts you rapport with the
universe. 30

Produce great persons, the rest follows.

America isolated I sing;
I say that works made here in the spirit of other lands, are so much
poison in The States.

(How dare such insects as we see assume to write poems for America?
For our victorious armies, and the offspring following the armies?)

Piety and conformity to them that like!
Peace, obesity, allegiance, to them that like!
I am he who tauntingly compels men, women, nations,
Crying, Leap from your seats, and contend for your lives!

I am he who walks the States with a barb'd tongue, questioning every
one I meet; 40
Who are you, that wanted only to be told what you knew before?
Who are you, that wanted only a book to join you in your nonsense?

(With pangs and cries, as thine own, O bearer of many children!
These clamors wild, to a race of pride I give.)

O lands! would you be freer than all that has ever been before?
If you would be freer than all that has been before, come listen to me.

Fear grace- Fear elegance, civilization, delicatesse,
Fear the mellow sweet, the sucking of honey-juice;
Beware the advancing mortal ripening of nature,
Beware what precedes the decay of the ruggedness of states and men. 50

Ages, precedents, have long been accumulating undirected materials,
America brings builders, and brings its own styles.

The immortal poets of Asia and Europe have done their work, and pass'd to other spheres,
A work remains, the work of surpassing all they have done.

America, curious toward foreign characters, stands by its own at all hazards,
Stands removed, spacious, composite, sound- initiates the true use of precedents,
Does not repel them, or the past, or what they have produced under their forms,
Takes the lesson with calmness, perceives the corpse slowly borne from the house,
Perceives that it waits a little while in the door- that it was fittest for its days,
That its life has descended to the stalwart and well-shaped heir who approaches, 60
And that he shall be fittest for his days.

Any period, one nation must lead,
One land must be the promise and reliance of the future.

These States are the amplest poem,
Here is not merely a nation, but a teeming nation of nations,
Here the doings of men correspond with the broadcast doings of the day and night,
Here is what moves in magnificent masses, careless of particulars,
Here are the roughs, beards, friendliness, combativeness, the Soul loves,
Here the flowing trains- here the crowds, equality, diversity, the Soul loves.

Land of lands, and bards to corroborate! 70

Of them, standing among them, one lifts to the light his west-bred face,
To him the hereditary countenance bequeath'd, both mother's and father's,
His first parts substances, earth, water, animals, trees,
Built of the common stock, having room for far and near,
Used to dispense with other lands, incarnating this land,
Attracting it Body and Soul to himself, hanging on its neck with incomparable love,
Plunging his seminal muscle into its merits and demerits,
Making its cities, beginnings, events, diversities, wars, vocal in him,
Making its rivers, lakes, bays, embouchure in him,
Mississippi with yearly freshets and changing chutes- Columbia, Niagara, Hudson, spending themselves lovingly in him, 80
If the Atlantic coast stretch, or the Pacific coast stretch, he stretching with them north or south,
Spanning between them, east and west, and touching whatever is between them,
Growths growing from him to offset the growth of pine, cedar, hemlock, live-oak, locust, chestnut, hickory, cottonwood, orange, magnolia,
Tangles as tangled in him as any cane-brake or swamp,
He likening sides and peaks of mountains, forests coated with northern transparent ice,
Off him pasturage, sweet and natural as savanna, upland, prairie,
Through him flights, whirls, screams, answering those of the fish-hawk, mocking-bird, night-heron, and eagle;
His spirit surrounding his country's spirit, unclosed to good and evil,
Surrounding the essences of real things, old times and present times,
Surrounding just found shores, islands, tribes of red aborigines, 90
Weather-beaten vessels, landings, settlements, embryo stature and muscle,
The haughty defiance of the Year 1- war, peace, the formation of the Constitution,
The separate States, the simple, elastic scheme, the immigrants,
The Union, always swarming with blatherers, and always sure and impregnable,
The unsurvey'd interior, log-houses, clearings, wild animals, hunters, trappers;
Surrounding the multiform agriculture, mines, temperature, the gestation of new States,
Congress convening every Twelfth-month, the members duly coming up from the uttermost parts;

Surrounding the noble character of mechanics and farmers, especially the young men,
Responding their manners, speech, dress, friendships- the gait they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors,
The freshness and candor of their physiognomy, the copiousness and decision of their phrenology, 100
The picturesque looseness of their carriage, their fierceness when wrong'd,
The fluency of their speech, their delight in music, their curiosity, good temper, and open-handedness- the whole composite make,
The prevailing ardor and enterprise, the large amativeness,
The perfect equality of the female with the male, the fluid movement of the population,
The superior marine, free commerce, fisheries, whaling, gold-digging,
Wharf-hemm'd cities, railroad and steamboat lines, intersecting all points,
Factories, mercantile life, labor-saving machinery, the north-east, north-west, south-west,
Manhattan firemen, the Yankee swap, southern plantation life,
Slavery- the murderous, treacherous conspiracy to raise it upon the ruins of all the rest;
On and on to the grapple with it- Assassin! then your life or ours be the stake- and respite no more. 110

(Lo! high toward heaven, this day,
Libertad! from the conqueress' field return'd,
I mark the new aureola around your head;
No more of soft astral, but dazzling and fierce,
With war's flames, and the lambent lightnings playing,
And your port immovable where you stand;
With still the inextinguishable glance, and the clench'd and lifted fist, And your foot on the neck of the menacing one, the scorner, utterly crush'd beneath you;
The menacing, arrogant one, that strode and advanced with his senseless scorn, bearing the murderous knife;
- Lo! the wide swelling one, the braggart, that would yesterday do so much! 120
To-day a carrion dead and damn'd, the despised of all the earth!
An offal rank, to the dunghill maggots spurn'd.)

Others take finish, but the Republic is ever constructive, and ever keeps vista;
Others adorn the past- but you, O days of the present, I adorn you!
O days of the future, I believe in you! I isolate myself for your

sake;
O America, because you build for mankind, I build for you!
O well-beloved stone-cutters! I lead them who plan with decision and science,
I lead the present with friendly hand toward the future.

Bravas to all impulses sending sane children to the next age!
But damn that which spends itself, with no thought of the stain, pains, dismay, feebleness it is bequeathing. 130

I listened to the Phantom by Ontario's shore,
I heard the voice arising, demanding bards;
By them, all native and grand- by them alone can The States be fused into the compact organism of a Nation.

To hold men together by paper and seal, or by compulsion, is no account;
That only holds men together which aggregates all in a living principle, as the hold of the limbs of the body, or the fibres of plants.

Of all races and eras, These States, with veins full of poetical stuff, most need poets, and are to have the greatest, and use them the greatest;
Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall.

(Soul of love, and tongue of fire!
Eye to pierce the deepest deeps, and sweep the world!
- Ah, mother! prolific and full in all besides- yet how long barren, barren?) 140

Of These States, the poet is the equable man,
Not in him, but off from him, things are grotesque, eccentric, fail of their full returns,
Nothing out of its place is good, nothing in its place is bad,
He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportion, neither more nor less,
He is the arbiter of the diverse, he is the key,
He is the equalizer of his age and land,
He supplies what wants supplying- he checks what wants checking,
In peace, out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich, thrifty, building populous towns, encouraging agriculture, arts, commerce, lighting the study of man, the Soul, health, immortality, government;

In war, he is the best backer of the war- he fetches artillery as
good as the engineer's- he can make every word he speaks draw
blood;
The years straying toward infidelity, he withholds by his steady
faith, 150
He is no argurer, he is judgment- (Nature accepts him absolutely ;)
He judges not as the judge judges, but as the sun falling round a
helpless thing;
As he sees the farthest, he has the most faith,
His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things,
In the dispute on God and eternity he is silent,
He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and denouement,
He sees eternity in men and women- he does not see men and women as
dreams or dots.

For the great Idea, the idea of perfect and free individuals,
For that idea the bard walks in advance, leader of leaders,
The attitude of him cheers up slaves and horrifies foreign
despots. 160

Without extinction is Liberty! without retrograde is Equality!
They live in the feelings of young men, and the best women;
Not for nothing have the indomitable heads of the earth been always
ready to fall for Liberty.

For the great Idea!
That, O my brethren- that is the mission of Poets.

Songs of stern defiance, ever ready,
Songs of the rapid arming, and the march,
The flag of peace quick-folded, and instead, the flag we know,
Warlike flag of the great Idea.

(Angry cloth I saw there leaping! 170
I stand again in leaden rain, your flapping folds saluting;
I sing you over all, flying, beckoning through the fight- O the hard-
contested fight!
O the cannons ope their rosy-flashing muzzles! the hurtled balls
scream!

The battle-front forms amid the smoke- the volleys pour incessant
from the line;
Hark! the ringing word, Charge! - now the tussle, and the furious
maddening yells;
Now the corpses tumble curl'd upon the ground,

Cold, cold in death, for precious life of you,
Angry cloth I saw there leaping.)

Are you he who would assume a place to teach, or be a poet here in
The States?
The place is august- the terms obdurate. 180

Who would assume to teach here, may well prepare himself, body and
mind,
He may well survey, ponder, arm, fortify, harden, make lithe,
himself,
He shall surely be question'd beforehand by me with many and stern
questions.

Who are you, indeed, who would talk or sing to America?
Have you studied out the land, its idioms and men?
Have you learn'd the physiology, phrenology, politics, geography,
pride, freedom, friendship, of the land? its substratums and
objects?
Have you consider'd the organic compact of the first day of the first
year of Independence, sign'd by the Commissioners, ratified by
The States, and read by Washington at the head of the army?
Have you possess'd yourself of the Federal Constitution?
Do you see who have left all feudal processes and poems behind them,
and assumed the poems and processes of Democracy?
Are you faithful to things? do you teach as the land and sea, the
bodies of men, womanhood, amativeness, angers, teach? 190
Have you sped through fleeting customs, popularities?
Can you hold your hand against all seductions, follies, whirls,
fierce contentions? are you very strong? are you really of the
whole people?
Are you not of some coterie? some school or mere religion?
Are you done with reviews and criticisms of life? animating now to
life itself?
Have you vivified yourself from the maternity of These States?
Have you too the old, ever-fresh forbearance and impartiality?
Do you hold the like love for those hardening to maturity; for the
last-born? little and big? and for the errant?

What is this you bring my America?
Is it uniform with my country?
Is it not something that has been better told or done before? 200
Have you not imported this, or the spirit of it, in some ship?
Is it not a mere tale? a rhyme? a prettiness? is the good old cause
in it?

Has it not dangled long at the heels of the poets, politicians,
literats, of enemies' lands?
Does it not assume that what is notoriously gone is still here?
Does it answer universal needs? will it improve manners?
Does it sound, with trumpet-voice, the proud victory of the Union, in
that secession war?
Can your performance face the open fields and the seaside?
Will it absorb into me as I absorb food, air- to appear again in my
strength, gait, face?
Have real employments contributed to it? original makers- not mere
amanuenses?
Does it meet modern discoveries, calibers, facts face to face? 210
What does it mean to me? to American persons, progresses, cities?
Chicago, Kanada, Arkansas? the planter, Yankee, Georgian,
native, immigrant, sailors, squatters, old States, new States?
Does it encompass all The States, and the unexceptional rights of all
the men and women of the earth? (the genital impulse of These
States ;)
Does it see behind the apparent custodians, the real custodians,
standing, menacing, silent- the mechanics, Manhattanese,
western men, southerners, significant alike in their apathy,
and in the promptness of their love?
Does it see what finally befalls, and has always finally befallen,
each temporizer, patcher, outsider, partialist, alarmist,
infidel, who has ever ask'd anything of America?
What mocking and scornful negligence?
The track strew'd with the dust of skeletons;
By the roadside others disdainfully toss'd.

Rhymes and rhymers pass away- poems distill'd from foreign poems pass
away,
The swarms of reflectors and the polite pass, and leave ashes;
Admirers, importers, obedient persons, make but the soul of
literature; 220
America justifies itself, give it time- no disguise can deceive it,
or conceal from it- it is impassive enough,
Only toward the likes of itself will it advance to meet them,
If its poets appear, it will in due time advance to meet them- there
is no fear of mistake,
(The proof of a poet shall be sternly deferr'd, till his country
absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorb'd it.)

He masters whose spirit masters- he tastes sweetest who results
sweetest in the long run;

The blood of the brawn beloved of time is unconstraint;
In the need of poems, philosophy, politics, manners, engineering, an
appropriate native grand-opera, shipcraft, any craft, he or she
is greatest who contributes the greatest original practical
example.

Already a nonchalant breed, silently emerging, appears on the
streets,
People's lips salute only doers, lovers, satisfiers, positive
knowers; There will shortly be no more priests- I say their
work is done, 230
Death is without emergencies here, but life is perpetual emergencies
here,
Are your body, days, manners, superb? after death you shall be
superb;
Justice, health, self-esteem, clear the way with irresistible power;
How dare you place anything before a man?

Fall behind me, States!
A man before all- myself, typical before all.

Give me the pay I have served for!
Give me to sing the song of the great Idea! take all the rest;
I have loved the earth, sun, animals- I have despised riches,
I have given alms to every one that ask'd, stood up for the stupid
and crazy, devoted my income and labor to others, 240
I have hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had patience and
indulgence toward the people, taken off my hat to nothing known
or unknown,
I have gone freely with powerful uneducated persons, and with the
young, and with the mothers of families,
I have read these leaves to myself in the open air- I have tried them
by trees, stars, rivers,
I have dismiss'd whatever insulted my own Soul or defiled my Body,
I have claim'd nothing to myself which I have not carefully claim'd
for others on the same terms, I have sped to the camps, and comrades
found and accepted from every State; (In war of you, as well as peace,
my suit is good, America- sadly I Boast; Upon this breast has many a dying
soldier lean'd, to breathe his last; This arm, this hand, this voice, have nourish'd,
rais'd, restored, To life recalling many a prostrate form :) 250
- I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth of the taste of
myself, I reject none, I permit all.

(Say, O mother! have I not to your thought been faithful?
Have I not, through life, kept you and yours before me?)

I swear I begin to see the meaning of these things!
It is not the earth, it is not America, who is so great,
It is I who am great, or to be great- it is you up there, or any one;
It is to walk rapidly through civilizations, governments, theories,
Through poems, pageants, shows, to form great individuals.

Underneath all, individuals! 260
I swear nothing is good to me now that ignores individuals,
The American compact is altogether with individuals,
The only government is that which makes minute of individuals,
The whole theory of the universe is directed to one single
individual- namely, to You.

(Mother! with subtle sense severe- with the naked sword in your hand,
I saw you at last refuse to treat but directly with individuals.)

Underneath all, nativity,
I swear I will stand by my own nativity- pious or impious, so be it;
I swear I am charm'd with nothing except nativity,
Men, women, cities, nations, are only beautiful from nativity. 270

Underneath all is the need of the expression of love for men and
women,
I swear I have seen enough of mean and impotent modes of expressing
love for men and women,
After this day I take my own modes of expressing love for men and
women.

I swear I will have each quality of my race in myself,
(Talk as you like, he only suits These States whose manners favor the
audacity and sublime turbulence of The States.)

Underneath the lessons of things, spirits, Nature, governments,
ownerships, I swear I perceive other lessons,
Underneath all, to me is myself- to you, yourself- (the same
monotonous old song.)

O I see now, flashing, that this America is only you and me,
Its power, weapons, testimony, are you and me,
Its crimes, lies, thefts, defections, slavery, are you and me, 280
Its Congress is you and me- the officers, capitols, armies, ships,
are you and me,
Its endless gestations of new States are you and me,
The war- that war so bloody and grim- the war I will henceforth

forget- was you and me,
Natural and artificial are you and me,
Freedom, language, poems, employments, are you and me,
Past, present, future, are you and me.

I swear I dare not shirk any part of myself,
Not any part of America, good or bad,
Not the promulgation of Liberty- not to cheer up slaves and horrify
foreign despots,
Not to build for that which builds for mankind, 290
Not to balance ranks, complexions, creeds, and the sexes,
Not to justify science, nor the march of equality,
Nor to feed the arrogant blood of the brawn beloved of time.

I swear I am for those that have never been master'd!
For men and women whose tempers have never been master'd,
For those whom laws, theories, conventions, can never master.

I swear I am for those who walk abreast with the whole earth!
Who inaugurate one, to inaugurate all.

I swear I will not be outfaced by irrational things!
I will penetrate what it is in them that is sarcastic upon me! 300
I will make cities and civilizations defer to me!
This is what I have learnt from America- it is the amount- and it I
teach again.

(Democracy! while weapons were everywhere aim'd at your breast,
I saw you serenely give birth to immortal children- saw in dreams
your dilating form;
Saw you with spreading mantle covering the world.)

I will confront these shows of the day and night!
I will know if I am to be less than they!
I will see if I am not as majestic as they!
I will see if I am not as subtle and real as they!
I will see if I am to be less generous than they! 310
I will see if I have no meaning, while the houses and ships have
meaning!
I will see if the fishes and birds are to be enough for themselves,
and I am not to be enough for myself.

I match my spirit against yours, you orbs, growths, mountains,
brutes, Copious as you are, I absorb you all in myself, and become the master
myself.

America isolated, yet embodying all, what is it finally except
Myself? These States- what are they except myself?

I know now why the earth is gross, tantalizing, wicked- it is for my
Sake, I take you to be mine, you beautiful, terrible, rude forms.

(Mother! bend down, bend close to me your face!
I know not what these plots and wars, and deferments are for; 320
I know not fruition's success- but I know that through war and peace
your work goes on, and must yet go on.)

.... Thus, by blue Ontario's shore,
While the winds fann'd me, and the waves came trooping toward me,
I thrill'd with the Power's pulsations- and the charm of my theme was
upon me, Till the tissues that held me, parted their ties upon me.

And I saw the free Souls of poets;
The loftiest bards of past ages strode before me,
Strange, large men, long unwaked, undisclosed, were disclosed to me.

O my rapt verse, my call- mock me not!
Not for the bards of the past- not to invoke them have I launch'd you
forth, 330
Not to call even those lofty bards here by Ontario's shores,
Have I sung so capricious and loud, my savage song.

Bards for my own land, only, I invoke;
(For the war, the war is over- the field is clear'd,)
Till they strike up marches henceforth triumphant and onward,
To cheer, O mother, your boundless, expectant soul.

Bards grand as these days so grand!
Bards of the great Idea! Bards of the peaceful inventions! (for the
war, the war is over!)
Yet Bards of the latent armies- a million soldiers waiting, ever-
ready,
Bards towering like hills- (no more these dots, these pigmies, these
little piping straws, these gnats, that fill the hour, to pass
for poets ;) 340
Bards with songs as from burning coals, or the lightning's fork'd
stripes!
Ample Ohio's bards- bards for California! inland bards- bards of the
war ;)
(As a wheel turns on its axle, so I find my chants turning finally on

the war ;)
Bards of pride! Bards tallying the ocean's roar, and the swooping eagle's scream!
You, by my charm, I invoke!